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INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: IRANIANS PROTEST DENIAL OF OVERFLIGHT
PERMISSION

REF: ANKARA 4279 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (U) The Iranian press published several articles on September 20 lambasting the GOT for refusing to allow an Iranian military plane carrying a delegation of senior GOI officials and parliamentarians to overfly Turkish airspace on its way to Tehran that same day, and for requiring a "forced landing" in Istanbul. The officials were purportedly to accompany President Ahmedinejad to the UN General Assembly but were denied US visas. Tehran's IRNA news quoted Deputy FM Mohammad Reza Baqeri as calling the plane's interception "illegal" and a "blatant violation of all diplomatic norms." According to the Tehran Fars News Agency, Turkey's Ambassador to Iran was summoned to the Foreign Ministry in Tehran to receive an official protest and a request for an apology. Fars also stated that the Turkish government had taken similar action against Iranian flights on several previous occasions.

¶12. (U) In response, the Turkish MFA issued a press statement (full text below) stating that the plane was denied overflight access for failing to file the requisite overflight request. When the pilot radioed that he was short of fuel, however, the plane was permitted to land at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport. Turkish airport authorities subsequently worked to obtain the necessary permissions for the plane to take off and overfly Turkish territory, which took three hours because the flight landed at 3:30 a.m. Responding to a question at a September 20 press conference, MFA Spokesman Namik Tan characterized Turkey's relations with Iran as important and lamented attempts to turn a technical matter into a political issue.

¶13. (U) Begin Informal Text of MFA Statement:

A B-707 military plane carrying the Iranian Ministers of Justice, Industry and Agriculture and others on a flight from Tehran to Dakar was granted one-way permission to overfly Turkey's airspace on September 13, 2006, as it requested.

The plane, which had not asked for permission to overfly Turkey on its return route, was notified of the lack of permission once it approached Turkish airspace. Noting a lack of sufficient fuel, the pilot requested permission for a technical landing at Istanbul Ataturk Airport at 3:30 a.m. on September 20, 2006, and the necessary permission was issued. As might be appreciated, acquiring the necessary permission in accordance with international aviation rules for the mentioned take-off was obtained in the early morning hours after the intensive efforts of the relevant authorities. The

take-off and flight permission number was provided to the officials of the Iranian Embassy in Ankara as well as to the pilot.

End Text.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: An MFA official, un-prompted, told us on September 19 that the GOT remains vigilant about Iranian overflight requests following US requests to detain or deny overflight to suspicious planes from that country (reftels). While it is plausible that this incident is merely the result of Iran's lack of technical follow-through, the Iranian response suggests a heightened sensitivity due to past GOT requests for Iranian aircraft to land and be searched. END COMMENT.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON